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ABSTRACT

Interviews were conducted with 35 grass roots activists from middle-sized U.S. cities and small towns to learn about their perspectives and activities. No effort was made to obtain a representative sample of activists. The five main approaches to social change encountered were represented by members of the ideological and political left, by community-organizing and neighborhood empowerment groups, and by advocates of lifestyle change, interpersonal transformation (e.g., feminism), and spiritual transformation. Among the findings are the following. There is a strong emphasis on decentralization among grass roots activists. A possible basis for collaboration between localists and globalists is their shared anti-statism. The networks created by local activists tend not to extend beyond the state (nation) boundary. Local activists tend not to be activating, or even informing, local people about suffering on a global basis. Local activists tend to change their lifestyles so that they reflect their beliefs; the globalists do not. The localists rarely have visions of the future, compared to the global future tradition of the globalists. There are a small number of local/global activists. (Author/RM)

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Grass Roots Activism in the United States: Global Implications?

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ABSTRACT

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"Grass Roots Activism in the United States: Global Implications?"

Interviews/dialogues with some 35 grass roots activists in the United States sought answers to these questions: (1) Why are globalists and localists working on similar issues isolated from each other? (2) Do they have common concerns? (3) Would they have more influence on centers of economic and political power if they worked together? (4) If they wished to work together, how might this be done? The authors, specialists on international/global affairs, conducted the interviews/dialogues to learn about the perspectives and activities of local activists. Five main approaches to social transformation were encountered: the ideological and political left; community-organizing, neighborhood empowerment groups; lifestyle change; interpersonal transformation, including feminism, relations with children and sexual preferences; and spiritual transformation. Among the findings are the following: (1) There is a strong emphasis on decentralization, (2) A possible basis for collaboration between localists and globalists is their shared anti-statism. (3) The networks created by local activists tend not to extend beyond the state ("nation") boundary, although many have a vague identity with and concern for humankind. (4) Local activists tend not to be activating, or even informing, local people about suffering on a global basis. (5) One aspect of the gap between them is the more "spiritual" and lifestyle elements of local activism, in contrast to the more technocratic globalists. (6) The localists rarely have visions of the future, compared to the global future tradition of the globalists. (7) Highly significant is the discovery of a small number of local/global activists. They should be further studied for insights on how the local-global gap can be bridged.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Problem

Demand for reform, indeed structural change, in world political, economic and military systems is being voiced in a variety of international governmental organizations, Third World governmental groups, and a number of international nongovernmental groups. Proposed changes address a diversity of global issues (arms races, communications, ecology, human rights, militarization, poverty, and war). Because the United States is a major actor in the world, its behavior has significant impact on all of these problems. Furthermore, its governance process is such that responses by the people make a difference in how it behaves. But there is not a strong constituency pressuring the government to creatively address global issues in a sustained effort. Nevertheless, there are many people in the United States, we will call them globalists, who are concerned with the global issues already noted. But at the same time, with notable exceptions for short periods of time (nuclear freeze at the moment), there is a lack of response by the grass roots on global issues.

Meanwhile, there is considerable grass roots activity on social issues focused on local communities. Much of this activity is concerned with the same issues that are also on the agenda of those calling for global transformation. Limiting our inquiry to the United States, this report will explore these questions:

1. Why are globalists and localists working on similar issues isolated from each other?
2. Do they have common concerns?
3. Would they have more influence on centers of economic and political power if they worked together?

4. If they wished to work together, how might this be done?

This is a very preliminary report on work in progress. It is shared with colleagues in order to stimulate criticism and to learn if others have similar research interests.

2. The Authors

Our field of specialization is traditionally labeled as International Relations and International Organization, although both of us have re-defined the field so that one of us tends to focus concern on the need for transforming global structures and the other on the need for transforming local participation in world systems. Common to both approaches is a global perspective formed by a set of humane world order values. Our professional concern has been not merely to understand the world, but to change it in the direction of this set of values, listed in alphabetic order: ecological stability, economic well-being, meaningful participation, peace, and social justice for all polities and all members of the human race.

We know there are large numbers of groups and individuals in the United States who are concerned with issues of social and economic justice for their own locale and within the national polity, and yet we have not been in contact with them. And so, this exercise. That is, we decided to become involved in interviews/dialogues/conversations with the social change, activists, community organizers, "the Movement," and the like, to see if we could learn what their agenda was, so that we might more meaningfully relate to it. The essay/report is then being written for ourselves and for people like ourselves: namely, individuals who believe

it is necessary to encourage a movement for global transformation within the broader public. Two assumptions underlie this exercise. First, there is an ongoing transformational process taking place on the face of the globe labeled by some as interdependence or interpenetration. Secondly, and more importantly, if this transformation is to achieve the values noted above, it will require a global social movement informed by these values; otherwise the transformation is highly likely to be destructive of these values and indeed, harsh, repressive and degrading for large numbers of the human race.

Each of us is convinced that the nation-state system as it presently operates is unable to deal with the problems of alienation, ecological instability, poverty, social injustice, and war. But we have a major difference in emphasis yet to be resolved on the manner in which this is likely to or should occur. One of us emphasizes the need for decentralizing and bypassing the state by articulating the already existing relationships that exist amongst the various local communities, cities and regions of the world, and indeed, maximizing them so that the national elites of states are much less significant in determining the policies and practices of these cities and regions. While making use of some of the notions of "small is beautiful," it does not adhere slavishly to its overall philosophical or social thought. It is, as it were, an attempt to provide local communities a rationale for announcing and practicing their own external, or, if you will, global policies. The other author emphasizes the necessity and feasibility of centralization at the global level in order to handle the global problemmatique. He is not a World Federalist, and the major theoretical and political thrust here has been an attempt to insinuate a structural--indeed, a struggle--theory of history into world

order thinking and praxis. Thus, our work together has produced continual tension between decentralization and centralization.

We have had somewhat different experiences in political processes and, within the context of the social movements of the United States, have emphasized different political ideologies. The decentralizer finds the progressive populist ideology, let us say, of the La Follette tradition, most congenial to his views and actual political participation. The centralizer has been involved in independent left-wing ideology and politics and "the Movement." While each of us has been intensely interested in the major social change movements over the past two decades--race, anti-Vietnam War, ecology, and feminism--our involvement in these movements has been by and large confined to the campus and public-speaking to the general public (although during the Vietnam War we practiced civil disobedience in a very modest way). There is also a difference between us in the kind of strategy and style of politics we believe is relevant to transformation. The person involved in decentralizing is more inclined to work with the building of alternative institutions reaching out to ordinary citizens, by using strategies that extend participation and leadership at the grass roots. The person who holds a more centralizing perspective tends to be engaged in confrontational and dissident politics with an emphasis on mass movements and civil disobedience as a way of achieving structural change.

3. Definition of Grass Roots

Since our concern here is with grass roots activism, it is important to note that the term has no accepted meaning, let alone analytic clarification. To be sure, when people use the term they seem to imply that they are talking about "ordinary citizens." But there is no consensus in

the meaning of that term. To begin with the term "grass roots" is of relatively recent origin in the U.S. political scene. According to Hans Sperber and Travis Trittschuh (American Political Terms, 1962) the term is said to have been used in Ohio around 1885 but is most firmly fixed with the Presidential campaign of Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 when it was characterized as a "campaign from the grass roots up". The first widespread use of the term, however, began in 1935 when the Republican Party began using "grass roots" in preparation for the 1936 Presidential campaign. For the politician it means, in the words of Eugene McCarthy, as stated in his excerpt from The Great Dictionary of American Politics, in 1962:

> GRASS ROOTS: The local area and its people. A politician goes to the grass roots when he returns home to find out what the individual voter is thinking about.

In a Dictionary of Social Reform, grass roots means heartland America and embraces both "progressive" and conservative ideologies.

> GRASSROOTS, a basic challenge to American social reformers, since it involves mid-western and western population, therefore farm owners as well as farm tenants, and thus a complex mixture of conservative and progressive impulses. Grassroots have spawned the inflexible Republicanism of Iowa, and also the Progressivism of Wisconsin, and in addition the utopian formulas of California, as well as variations on all three. Most important, they have involved the challenge of isolationism (q.v.). Grassroots conservatism has been as deceptive as grassroots radicalism, as seen in such figures as Borah, La Follette, Norris, Hiram Johnson, and more recently, Nye, Lemke, and Burton K. Wheeler (qq.v.). See Harold F. Gosnell, Grass Roots Politics, National Voting Behavior of Typical States (1942).

When political operators in the two major political parties talk about grass roots, they generally mean any citizen in their district who may vote. That is, they have a view that there is a vast citizenry for whom politics and empowerment are not significant or vital matters except when

the two political parties make it so; and this making it so is done at official times--elections. At the time of elections there may be issues but it is very rarely that a single one stands out, so political affiliation and personality tend to be more significant. It is very, very rare that any of these elections or political operators would conceive of their grass roots constituencies in transformational terms. Indeed, politicos from the major parties are annoyed, irritated, and even fearful of grass roots that become organized, whether of the single issue variety, the block, or the community, let alone those who wish to change the system.

Beyond the perspective of the political operator, and from a broad societal and literary/journalist perspective, grass roots has as one dominant strand Mainstreet, Babbitt USA, and would include the Rotary, the church, the school board, the professionals in the small town to medium-size cities, as well as what remains of rural America.

There is another kind of grass roots which stems from populism and has as its underlying rationale equity, participation, and challenge of bigness in business or government. It is Jacksonian in origin and has a strong cultural dimension of countryside against urban and city slicker, and especially that kind of culture that emanates from or integrates effeminate European ways. This populism has been infused by the left, anarchists, wobblies, socialism, communism, and has the sense of responding to the needs of the "people" or "workers" against big business and a government which is its handmaiden. Its heroes are Big Bill, Eugene Debs, Sacco, Vanzetti, and the like. But it is in origin and ambience heartland USA in its drive for equity, equality and participation.

In epigrammatic terms, there are, then, two strands; the grass roots of Main Street USA and the grass roots of populism. It is very important

to note that the first of these has been infused by electoral politics and the major political parties; and the second has been infused by the ideological left with notions of cells and cadres, as well as protest politics.

An additional and very significant factor has been the development of the back-of-the-yard, neighborhood movement, initiated by Saul Alinsky, and which now claims to have some ten million members. That is to say, there is a sense of grass roots which goes to providing urban poor, disadvantaged ethnic minorities and blacks a sense of empowerment which would permit them to get a share of the action. While the organizers who work in this activity generally have an affinity for the left, the fact is that many of the grass roots individuals and groups are nowhere near that ideology; their main concern is breaking down dismal urban ghettos, assisting decimated and hapless individuals in the more degenerative regions of the city. Their aim is to get some--if not adequate--share of the "action", a better economic deal and some participation in the political process of the present system.

Thus, grass roots seems to cover everything from the individual who may be apathetic--and even hostile with regard to electoral politics--to the highly focused and organized political cadres working from a fixed Marxist ideology who, as a matter of strategy or tactics, had decided to work within a confined, generally circumscribed territorial political entity. (Although in this latter case there may be a theoretical or actual linkage to similar cadres in other territorial political jurisdictions.) To the extent that there is an operative meaning, it is "working at the local level".

4. Information Sources

The prime source of information for this report is interviews/dialogues carried out between May 1982 and June 1983 with some 35 people "working at the local level," predominantly in middle sized cities and small towns.[1] The basic purpose of the interviews/dialogues was to put the authors in face-to-face interchange with local activists in whatever mode of exchange seemed to be most productive in each case. When more formal interviews seemed likely to be productive, these questions guided the interviews:

What wrong or injustice are you trying to rectify?

How did you become involved?

What is your main agenda?

Who are your "friends"?

Who are your "enemies"?

What critical problems do you face?

Describe your most significant successes.

Describe your most significant failures.

What will happen in the next five years? Five to ten years?

What would you like to see happen over the next twenty years?

In attempting to deal with the vast variety of ways in which individuals defined their "cause," we found ourselves thinking along five dimensions. They were: (1) The extent to which the activists saw themselves as dealing with a single or set of issues; (2) The extent to which the identity of the social activists who were involved saw themselves as being

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[1] Included are Columbus (Ohio); Minneapolis (Minnesota); New York City; Newark (New Jersey); Newton (Massachusetts); Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), Phoenix (Arizona); Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania); Princeton (New Jersey); Scranton (Pennsylvania); Seattle (Washington; and Yates County (New York).

involved in a particular territorial context, and the extent to which this identity reached to the entire globe; (3) The extent to which the change being called for was seen as reform or transformational by their own perspective, albeit we undoubtedly have standards of evaluation which color our interpretation of these definitions; (4) Whether the style of change involved violence or non-violence; and if non-violent, the extent to which electoral politics, movement politics, and civil disobedience were involved; (5) Finally, the time span over which the cause or problem might be dealt with.

We were very self-conscious in our efforts not to introduce our international/global perspectives into our interviews/dialogues in ways that would affect responses. Of course, respondents had to be told at the outset that the focus of our personal concern had long been with global issues and that the purpose of our interviews/dialogues was to find out what local activists were thinking and doing. Beyond that, we very deliberately did not ask questions about global concerns, but were very attentive to whether our respondents revealed any affiliations, awareness of, or thoughts about, transnational issues or activities, or issues and activities in other countries. In cases where no mention of these matters was made by respondents, we concluded our discussions with open-ended questions about possible transnational aspects of the issues and activities in which they were involved.

A second source of information has been the research of one author on the worldwide connections of local places to world systems and his efforts to discern, and experiment with, possible ways through which local people can become autonomous participants, in these systems. . This work has been based in Columbus, Ohio, but has been infused with experiences in other

cities, both in the United States and in other countries. His work has probed the characteristics of transnational activity with local roots: Who is involved? What is their agenda? How is the quality of involvement affected by perceptions of the world, of the state system, of obligations of citizenship? This work offers insight on why most people involved in local issues tend to confine their interests and activities to the territorial space of the United States.

A third source of information has been a growing body of literature on social movements and on local activism specifically.

5. Characteristics of Interview/Dialogue Universe

We defined the universe from which we would draw our respondents as individuals active in groups who felt that there was something "wrong" with the world and who had committed themselves to changing their society and the world into a better place for human beings. Initially we identified some 15 to 20 causes as comprising the universe from which respondents would be selected. The basis for doing so was that they were understood to be a political cause grouping by the informed public, and by individuals identified with this cause. We were well aware that there is overlapping amongst these groups:

Alternative life styles
Anti-corporate/consumer responsibility
Anti-imperialist
Anti-nuclear
Citizen action/community
Civil rights
Decentralists--small is beautiful
Ecology
Gay rights
Handicapped
Indigenous peoples
Insurgent labor
Internationalists (from UNA to World Federalists)
Left-wing church
New Age
Senior citizens
Vietnam veterans
Women

These groups, of course, include people with a global perspective. But in selecting individuals to be interviewed we made certain that their

activities were firmly rooted in grass roots. They ranged from persons focusing on local single issues to activists with a global perspective who were working on local concerns. We made an effort to obtain respondents from a number of these causes but made no effort to obtain a systematic sample of the universe described. Instead we allowed opportunity and intuition to guide us to individuals who had a relatively high intensity of feeling about a wrong, who tended to be very active and who were reported to be good sources of information on their group's activity.

Before we specify more concretely the individuals and groups with whom we actually conducted interviews/dialogues, it is important also to note the universe of individuals and groups we did not attempt to cover. Most significantly, we did not reach out to persons who were attempting to bring about reform within the traditional practices, guidelines and rhetoric of the Republican or Democratic Party. The other major groups with whom we did not engage were the conservative social change agents, running from the Committee on Present Danger to the Moral Majority; nor did we deal with such radical movements as the Libertarians. While there may be a good deal to be learned from an analysis of their positions and dialoguing with them, this would have to wait for another occasion, for it seemed to us that getting a feel for the progressive social change activists was a large task in itself.

6. The Context of Present Grass Roots Activism in the United States

It is obvious that grass roots activism in the United States today has a diversity of origins, running from Thomas Paine, to varieties of Populism, to wobblies and abolitionists; it includes prohibitionism, women's, labor, gay, anti-nuclear and anti-war movements. Some activists identify

strongly with this heritage, or with part of it, as when some women see their action evolving out of the achievements of their antecedents who won the suffrage. Other activists tend to be moved to action out of their own unique experiences with injustice, often unfamiliar with similar endeavors in earlier times and even in other places at the present. There are also many working on a diversity of issues who tend to perceive their activity as a continuation of "the Movement." By this they mean a movement that developed out of the civil rights movement in the late 1950s and eventually extended to welfare rights, anti-Vietnam, feminism, environment, gay rights, anti-nuclear and other issues. Jo Freeman defines "the Movement" in this way:

> The term "the Movement" was originally applied to the civil rights movement by those participating in it, but as this activity expanded into a general radical critique of American society and concomitant action, the term broadened with it. To white youth throughout most of the sixties, "the Movement" referred to that plethora of youth and/or radical activities that started from the campus and eventually enveloped a large segment of middle-class youth.
>
> The imprecise use of the term is illustrative of the imprecise definitions of the Movement. In some ways, it was several movements operating under the same rubric with a certain affinity, if not always agreement. In other ways, it was an ill-matched pairing of a social base in search of an ideology and an ideology in search of a social base. The Movement is also referred to as "the student movement" and "the New Left," reflecting the respective social base and ideology. (Freeman, 1983, 13)

"The Movement" stemmed initially from incompatibility of racism with the ideological thrust for equality, equity, and political participation in U.S. tradition. While there were a variety of ideological perspectives brought to bear in the struggle against racism, the predominant strand in this struggle was the call for major change within the system. Blacks were to be given the same opportunities and treatment as the white majority; but

the political, economic and foreign relations of the society were to remain the same. It was a "single-issue" focus but, because it covered all of social life, it was a broad single issue.

Three other issues that, in part, evolved out of the civil rights movement, rights of the poor, feminism and sexual preference, have similar ideological underpinnings, that is, equality, equity, and political participation. Environment is also one of those single issues which, while not building on equality, equity and participation, has the potential for calling for major transformation. It therefore should be singled out as a cutting edge for "the Movement." "The Movement" has a hard core of individuals who are into transformation across a wide variety of issues. Many of these people see a specific single issue as a focal point for building a larger movement that will make system transformation possible. Of course, the majority of single issue activists do not perceive themselves as part of "the Movement" at all.

Social activists, whether they personally identify with "the Movement" or not, tend to emphasize one of five approaches to transformation.

1. The ideological and political left, including some populism.
2. Community-organizing, neighborhood empowerment groups.
3. Lifestyle change.
4. Interpersonal transformation, with feminism as the leading dimension, although other non-hierarchical arrangements (including children) as well as open sexual preferences are part of this.
5. Spiritual transformation. From renewed Christian visioning through transendental meditation to Buddhism, et. al., to humanistic Maslowian growth psychology.

These categories are based on themes strongly asserted by particular activists. Obviously there is much overlap, as when, for example, persons employing either interpersonal transformation or ecological ethics emphasize neighborhood empowerment. Perhaps the clearest distinction is to be found between the political left, the eco-grouping, and personal/spiritual growth. One could argue that these three basic positions are beginning to show up as part of the ethical and personal attributes of a growing number of people throughout the United States.

We have spent a good deal of time with 35 individuals who are active in one of the five approaches noted above. Although our findings are admittedly impressionistic, we have found a movement (we now use the term in a broader sense) of dissent, protest and transformation in the United States that embraces a broad spectrum, running from traditional electoral politics to spiritual transformation. It includes mainstream liberals and confrontational radicals; and there is a subculture of local community organizing which is part of the movement but never has been well-integrated into it.

Within the movement there is a central core of activists who have participated in many protest and dissent groups who are veterans of electoral as well as confrontational politics, and increasingly large numbers of individuals who have been involved in civil disobedience. The movement is widespread and diffused throughout the country. Indeed, it has left the main urban centers of the east and west coasts and there are now individuals and cadres of cells in small and medium-sized communities and cities in the United States who carry on the movement ideologically as well as politically. The movement is very wary of national leadership.

The ideology of those who identify with "the Movement" at this point seems to be best exemplified by those individuals who are attempting to carry on a lifestyle change with direct confrontation as well as dissociation with authoritative structures. They are individuals who hotly contested the Vietnam War--by draft resistance, civil disobedience, tax denial and the like--who have come to ecological ethic, male/female equality, interpersonal sensitivity, and decentralization. They meditate and mobilize; they pray and protest. They act as a bridge between the wealthy, affluent, spiritual and eco-types and the protest, dissent movement people.

There is no agreed-upon coherent vision for which they are striving. There seems to be a general consensus that we need to decentralize and make certain that there are participatory processes in organizing, mobilizing and establishing institutions. The local territorial based group has become central to this way of thinking. At the same time many of them have knowledge of the global structure that impinges upon them.

There is no agreed-upon strategy of transition, although "Movement" activity rather than electoral politics, or at least "Movement" activity as a way to prod electoral politics, is the main focus of their work. There is no significant individual, let alone group, promoting the use of direct violence.

Racism and black participation seems to have dropped out of the agenda of "the Movement." Four reasons are suggested for this by the blacks themselves. First, because blacks have made an incredible advance. If you take electoral politics in the 1960's there were only five elected officials at the state and national levels. Today there are close to 1300. Secondly, with the advance, however, has come the sell-out. Put in another

way, once blacks achieve power, they behave like anyone else. Third, the system is too difficult to overcome--and even black power won't do it. Fourth, under present U.S. political circumstances the black community has become fragmented. Apathy, despair, hopelessness, including an overwhelming use of drugs, are part of the inner-city black experience. There is a postscript. Some would argue that the rift between the blacks and the Jews over Isael has been a severe detriment to the blacks and to the entire movement itself.

Of course, the recent election of Harold Washington as mayor of Chicago, and the nomination for mayor of Wilson Good by the Democrats in Philadelphia, as well as the fact that black mayors now preside over Gary, Newark, Los Angeles and Atlanta as well as some two dozen (?) Southern cities, suggest that this fragmentation could be diminishing, but it does not necessarily mean that the first three problems noted above will be overcome. However, one way of viewing the present presidential politics of Jesse Jackson, as well as political activity of other black leaders, is as an attempt to insinuate the black community as an interest group, as that term is understood by political scientists, as part of the conventional electoral process of the United States. The complementariness of this approach to, let us say, the 20th anniversary of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech on August 27, 1983, may foreshadow a new black potency, following a somewhat dorment 5 to 10 years.

Finally, local activists tend to completely dismiss labor as a force of political innovation. The three groupings that are now looked upon as potential leaders are church, students and self-styled middle class transformationalists.

7. The Territorial Boundaries of Grass Roots Activity

A critical barrier between those striving for global transformation and those working for local transformation is the difference in how they perceive the boundaries of their activity. The globalist is concerned about problems that rapidly growing interdependence (or domination and dependency) is creating for worldwide economic well-being, social justice, ecological balance and peace. In contrast, those demanding local transformation are demanding economic well-being, social justice, and ecological balance in local communities. The stage for the localist is the local community. While they may be involved in networks that link them to other local communities, these networks do not extend beyond state ("nation") borders. The stage for the globalist is in the network of worldwide economic, social and political processes that extend beyond the state. While both are attempting to transform the powers and practices of the centralized state, they are facing in different directions--one outward and one inward.

In the past two decades the attention of the global transformationalist has been drawn increasingly outward not only by issues generated by "interdependence" but also by the entry of Third World states into the state system. As the Third World has begun to speak for itself in world affairs, these globalists have been propelled into transnational dialogue, collaboration and conflict with Third World colleagues. These transnational relationships have had tremendous impact on the agenda of United States globalists, moving them from an earlier, more narrow emphasis on world order schemes that would prevent war to a broader agenda that is increasingly responsive to the struggles and sufferings of all humanity. As these relationships have increased the active involvement of these globalists in

worldwide networks, it has broadened the gulf between them and local affairs in their own society.

In contrast, many working for social transformation within the United States have, over the last two decades, shifted their focus from the national to the local scene. Disaffection with national efforts at social transformation have led to widespread moves for decentralization. Many participants in national movements who had congregated in Washington and New York have returned to their home cities, or even to small towns and rural areas. Efforts formerly focused on the development of national networks are now centered on building supportive networks in local communities. Some who have now moved to the local scene exhibited global knowledge and interests when acting on the national scene. But most tend not to bring overtly their earlier global concerns to bear as they intensify their involvement in local affairs. Many other local activists have never been part of the national scene. They are local people who have become dissatisfied with local conditions and with the failure of all kinds of external authorities and movements to rectify these conditions. They are wary of all national leaders and "outside agitators".

In our interviews we discerned four prototypic kinds of local activists. First are those whose activism has been spurred by efforts to transform local conditions, and whose present action and past experience has been limited to a local arena. When talking about their activities and concerns, these people limit their observations to the local setting. Yet, if dialogue is pushed toward the rest of the world, most reveal a humanistic concern that has no boundaries and extends to humanity as a whole.

Two examples of how identity with humankind came out in interviews under prodding demonstrate broad differences on this point. A college graduate, a leader in a coop in Phoenix, is not directly involved in global issues but does see her work in changing the U.S. capitalistic system as related to worldwide human relationships:

> When I say trying to change the system, first of all if I were trying to write a right system I don't think I'd be capable of doing it because I don't know what we want, but I know where we're moving, and I know what we have to move toward to change. We have to care a lot more about each other, not only our neighbors, but our fellow humans across the globe . . .

A high school graduate organizing her neighborhood in Columbus revealed how becoming active in her neighborhood led to wider and wider involvement that now extends to thoughts about people in the rest of the world. Her response to a question about the relevance of the rest of the world to her neighborhood work reveals an emotional identity with humanity, but it is exceedingly difficult for her to put this into words. The extracts below have been taken from three single spaced pages in which the questioner made a number of brief interventions urging her to continue her thoughts:

> . . . When I first started out, I felt very isolated. I felt like I was really some kind of an oddball. I really did. A lot of my neighbors did, too, because they didn't know me. I had just moved into the area, I had gotten mad at the city, and all of a sudden I was getting organized, getting things done, getting things accomplished in the area. And they really felt that I was some kind of an oddball. . .
>
> . . . And the more active I got and the more and more open I got about my feelings and what was going on and the interchange between people, I felt that they had the same problems I did. So when we sat down and talked, and they felt isolated, they felt the same type of motivation that I did, and when we started sharing experiences, I felt it was almost identical with mine. It was like linking up with somebody else that had the same motivation, ideas, the same isolation, or

whatever. And it just seemed to grow and I found more people that felt the same way and it just sort of fanned out. We've all kept in touch with each other, kept talking, kept working out ideas and problems and growing and growing. The way I see what I'm doing on a local level, how it links up with what's going on in an international level, is I can see, like the U.S. involvement in El Salvador. I can see how that's having a reaction here on a local level. I can see how Reagan's programs or Reagan's cutbacks have affected everybody from the local to the state to the federal level. I can see that with the involvement the U.S. has in El Salvador, the money that is being used there military-wise or whatever has been cut from social programs, has been cut from different programs. And I really feel that Reaganism is robbing Peter to pay Paul. I don't know if I'm getting across what I really want to. . .

. . . Sometimes when I vocalize what I want to say, I don't get it correct, but I can see things that on the level here in the United States, like the nuclear arms race. I can see the movement, how it's happening and affecting those in Europe, how it's happening and affecting those here in the United States. What vaguely I've seen what's going on in the U.S.S.R., in regards to the nuclear wars race. I can see that the interchange, and I can see identical problems between both peoples, both countries, and I can see things that I wouldn't know how to link up in regards to that . . .

. . . I can see that even though they may not be on the same level of social change as I am, I can see people, Polish people, the Solidarity and things like this. I can see them trying to work against the government repression. I can see them trying to link up with other people, other unions, to get a more stable economy, to get bread and water, bread and milk on their tables, to get things done. I can see the government's repression that they've done on the Polish people. I wouldn't have looked at things like that three years ago. I wouldn't have cared, because it didn't affect me, or at least I thought it didn't affect me. . .

. . . It is, it's hard to get it out in words. I can see things, I can see an interreaction. I can see things happening to other countries, and it may not be the same identical problem on the same level as the problem that I had, but there's kind of a connection, a link to it, because in some way everybody in the United States, across the world, has got the same needs, the same wants and the same emotions as you and I have.

The second and third prototype consists of those who have been involved in national organizations, directed from major cities, some concerned with international issues such as Vietnam and arms races but who have now moved their scene of activity to local communities. Departure from major cities has been motivated by perceived inability to achieve fundamental change without a stronger grass roots base. Some of these people fit the second prototype in that, at least by their explicit declaration, they have turned their back completely on national organizations and are committed only to local transformation. Others fit a third prototype in that they see local action as a means for building a base for stronger national organizations.

We did not interview Milton Kotler, but his lucid description of his movement from national to local affairs illustrates the second prototype. Writing out of his "friendship and common work with the people of the East Central Citizens Organization in Columbus, Ohio," he graphically portrays his transformation from the pursuit of "global revolution" to the "neighborhood as the source of revolutionary power." He merits extensive quotation:

> What are we to make of such assertions of local control and of the different kinds of organization and tactics? It is as if the neighborhood has sprung from its quiet niche in the metropolis to surprise us with its claim for local liberty.
>
> The nation--and by that we mean those who think in national terms--is confused and disturbed by this eruption of local power and its hundred faces. Here it is the public school that the community wants to control, there the businesses in the neighborhood. Now it is control of police, again it is control of the welfare office or antipoverty center. What are we to make of this rising up of the people, not for national purposes or even for city control, but, simply, for neighborhood control? To understand this new political movement, we must understand the nature of the neighborhood, so long ignored or misunderstood, and with

that understanding we must examine the nature of the modern revolution of local control.

We are indeed in a revolution, but it is not the kind we were taught to expect. Our models were ambitious and of earthshaking power. Carried by universal history, no less, they announced their coming through ideology. From this heritage of global revolution, however, we managed to whittle its force down to national revolution. Now, in view of the rebellion, we must further lower our sights to urban revolution; we must accept the neighborhood as the source of revolutionary power, and local liberty as its modest cause.

The informed metaphor of the bloody image of revolution has been implanted in our minds by teachers from Robespierre to Stalin. Revolution, we supposed, came with universal doctrine and violent death. We were not prepared for the intimate demands and mild disorder of local revolution. Had we known that liberty lies in a self-governing community, rather than in man's separation from it, we would not feel panic at today's movement for local control, and at the urban rebellions which our panic creates.

We had been taught that revolution springs from causes larger than men--from historic forces--when it springs, in fact, from matters which cause anger and fear and contempt in the basic situations of people's lives, such as their schools, jobs, welfare, health, and so on.

In short, our knowledge has been misguided in the direction of globalism. World power, not local liberty, captivated our imaginations for so long that it has distracted us from practical thought and civic emotions. For who really cares about the globe! That issue was settled when we discovered it was round.

On behalf of the abstract global imagination, we have deprived people of a decent local life. Our affluence has been squandered into projects of no practical consequence, except the loss of felicity. By impoverishing millions for war and world adventures, we breed anger. The tensions of world power and the requirements of domination cause millions to fear; and the very brazenness of this misappropriation of wealth and misuse of rule earns the contempt of the remaining millions. But realizing these rebellious emotions requires a fine sensitivity toward the neighborhood, for it is in the neighborhood, not across the world or even in the nation, that people talk to each other and amplify their feelings until they move to recover the source of value in their lives. They move toward

> objects that neighbors understand and share--namely, the community and its self-rule, rather than its present neglect. And local control it must be, for the central government, with its global ambitions, cannot rule the neighborhood well because of what it despises--namely, local liberty.
>
> In this new day it is important to realize that government must rule its domain, rather than aggrandize new territory. City government must rule its neighborhoods, rather than annex whole counties. Insistence on expansion, whether by nations or cities, requires oppressive control over their people, who may lose their rights as subjects living in a community of good will but do not entirely forget them. If this right is abused by governments that will not rule, there is no alternative to local liberty and self-rule. Thus two items today become apparent. People revolt when their civic emotions are abused. They do not need global doctrine when the image of good community is sufficient. (Kotler, xi-xiii)

Kotler's attack on the United States national government for "impoverishing millions for war and world adventures" could have been written by the globalists. But the implication he draws is quite different. Instead of calling for global transformation, he concludes that "globalism" itself is bad. So the arena of action he chooses for resistance to national government policy is the neighborhood. On the other hand, the globalists choose to resist this policy in the global arena, by supplanting bad "globalism" with global transformation.

In contrast to Kotler, there are local activists who have shifted from global to local issues but who still see their local activity as a means, at least partly, for fulfilling global concerns. They fit our third prototype. An example is the three former anti-war movement people on the staff of the Ohio Public Interest Campaign in Columbus who are now trying to empower local people on economic issues. One reports:

> We had no political power to work with. There was nothing, there was no organization out there except some peace oriented churches and that sort of thing, but you had nothing, no effective way of producing

> votes. We individually came to the conclusion that to achieve those ends you needed to achieve broader coalitions on economic issues . . . linking it directly to pocketbook kinds of issues . . . People don't listen until they can see the link to them . . . It was frustrating trying to deal with the national level with nobody behind you. It's going to take longer, and we're all pretty impatient, but it's gotta happen, we've got to get people together economically.

It is a characteristic of this third prototype that they do not include international/global issues on their agenda with the exception that there is a growing tendency for local activists of all kinds to cite military expenditures as a cause of inadequate funding of local social programs.

Our fourth prototype is those who are active in local communities but who blend local action with global issues. Thus, for example, there is a prominent pacifist anti-war individual who helped organize the Movement for a New Society. They are a group of individuals who have committed themselves to working within urban settings on local problems of race, poverty, and the like, as well as the militarism issue. They become involved in neighborhood, community and city-wide activities and sponsor events like peace fairs or walkathons or store front self-help groups which provide assistance and information about local and global problems. They are very much concerned with interpersonal sensitivity and inclined to be vegetarians, nonsmokers, and adopting a frugal lifestyle. Their successes at the local level, in the sense of being accepted, are impressive.

In the United States, neither the globalists nor the localists have yet been very successful in their transformation objectives, as signified by growth in arms expenditures and unemployment. Our interviews/dialogues make it even more plausible that the gulf between them is contributing to their lack of success. On the one hand, the globalists lack support in their own society. Cut off from the grass roots, they cannot mobilize

support. On the other hand, the localists are trying to cope locally with issues such as unemployment, energy prices and pollution that are largely shaped by global systems. Yet events seem to be leading the globalists and localists toward an increasingly common agenda. The broadening of the agenda of the globalists over the past two decades from more traditional war-peace issues into concurrent concern for global justice, economic well-being and ecological balance has involved them in the same issues as the localists, albeit from a different boundary perspective. At the same time localists have become involved in war-peace issues as they have challenged rising military expenditures in the interest of applying tax dollars to fulfillment of local needs. Their increasingly common agenda only makes the gap between localists and globalists more puzzling, particularly as it seems to inhibit the development of stronger coalitions for social transformation.

There is an unspoken, yet very real dividing line between localists and globalists--state ("nation") boundaries. When we asked local activists to describe their activities, and their successes and failures, they primarily talked about local problems and local activities. But eventually they would reveal that they had found the need to link up with those involved in similar movements in other places, in order to share ideas and to build strength through regional, state or national coalitions. But their expressed need to move beyond the local did not transcend national boundaries. Nor did their discussion of issues recognize the fact that most local issues are affected by world systems. On the other hand, when pushed to assume a global perspective, respondents tended to easily relate to people beyond their national boundary in two senses. They recognized that many people in other countries face the same kinds of problems as

those confronted by people in their own community. And, they tended to feel some kind of identity with humanity that includes concern for the welfare of others who, like themselves, are facing difficult social problems. Also, when pushed, most would cite military expenditures as a problem taking resources away from local social programs. But our respondents confined their activities within the boundaries of their country and did not perceive this to be a problem. There was widespread ignorance of governmental and nongovernmental international institutions with issue agendas similar to those of local citizen movements. And there seemed to be no awareness of groups working for global transformation with respect to the same kinds of issues.

8. What Have We Learned?

By stepping back from our interviews/dialogues in the United States, we can succinctly enumerate, in a preliminary assessment, what we have learned:

1. There is a widespread consensus on the desirability of decentralization.
2. There is a widespread shift of people from action through national organizations in a few large cities to local action in many small cities and towns.
3. Some who move from national to local action tend to see local action as a means for building grassroots support for national action, but others now see local action as an end in itself.
4. Most who move from national to local action who have international/global experience and knowledge tend not to overtly inject this knowledge and experience into their local action.

5. Very few local activists combine local and global/international perspectives.
6. Some involved in local action become active for the first time through personal experience with a perceived wrong.
7. There seems to be a natural tendency for these locally activated people to join with others in collaborative activity in a networking process that extends through neighborhood, city, region and often the nation.
8. Rarely does this networking transcend national boundaries.
9. Local activists tend to have very little knowledge about either governmental or nongovernmental organizations, or social movements, that transcend national borders, even in the issue area in which they are active.
10. Despite the lack of action that transcends national borders there is widespread feeling of empathy for people beyond those borders and an understanding that they are facing similar problems.
11. There are a diversity of action styles: protest, electoral politics, lifestyle change, transformation of interpersonal relationships, spiritual transformation, etc.
12. There is a cadre of people who identify with "the Movement" who are combining these action styles.
13. There is virtually no advocacy of direct violence.
14. Many feel that "the Movement" is alive and well "in the hinterland."
15. Blacks and labor are not now considered to be a potent force.
16. The exception to the gap between local and international/global issues is a tendency for military expenditures to be frequently

mentioned as a factor contributing to inadequate resources for local social programs.

17. An exception in the gap between local action and action on international/global issues was the involvement of many local activists in the June 12 anti-nuclear demonstrations at the United Nations, in New York City, and in related demonstrations in other cities.

18. Local activists tend not to have a vision of what a desired future world would be like.

What is the relevance of these findings to the questions, listed in the introduction to this paper, that stimulated this inquiry:

1. Why are globalists and localists working on similar issues isolated from each other?
2. Do they have common concerns?
3. Would they have more influence on centers of economic and political power if they worked together?
4. If they wished to work together, how might this be done?

It would seem that the strong emphasis on decentralization, accompanied by movement to small cities and towns from big cities by many activists, contributes to a gap between globalists and localists. Many local activists are new to the local scene. They are going through a period of transformation in which they must become acquainted with the local contexts in which they are working, establish common ground with local people and even learn a new vocabulary for social action. This often involves abandonment of earlier involvement in international/global issues. At the same time the globalists have been losing touch with local communities as they spend more and more time in dialogue with globalists from other parts of the world. This too has required becoming acquainted with

new contexts and vocabularies, about dependency, new international economic and information orders, etc. But action implications that flow out of this context are changes in global structures, in contrast to the changes in local structures that occupy the localists.

But there seems to be a shared concern of both localists and globalists, a severe criticism of the performance of national governments which could often be perceived as anti-statism. The anti-statism of the globalist tends to produce global transformation strategies that go around, and perhaps beyond, states whereas the anti-statism of the localists tends to promote local transformation that ignores states. We did not uncover either serious anarchist or world government positions; and the line of attack on the state was ambivalent in that our respondents would frequently talk about taking over the reigns of power. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that the criticism of national governments had an underlying logic that went to questioning the capacity of the state to meet the needs of human beings at the local and the global level. Because the globalists and the localists are working in different arenas, often involving different priorities and vocabularies, this shared anti-statism tends to be obscured. There is even a tendency for some localists and globalists to disparage the work of each other. The localist may believe that "globaloney" is at best premature until grassroots transformation is achieved. The globalist tends to think that local transformation is impossible as long as powerful states and corporations control world systems. It would seem that many localists and globalists do have a common concern in redefining the role of states. Both have a very important role, perhaps in collaboration, to play in this redefinition, and in its implementation.

While very few local activists are involved in, or even perceive, activity that transcends national borders, there does tend to be a widespread tendency for local activists to be concerned about and to identify with those suffering injustice everywhere. (But we did encounter exceptions in local activists working on senior citizen and environment issues.) This is a concern that is shared with those desiring global transformation. It would seem that this shared unbounded identity with those suffering from injustice offers important common ground for collaboration between those people working for local transformation and those working for global transformation.

Nevertheless, it seems important that local activists tend not to be activating, or even informing, local people with respect to suffering on a global basis. It could be significant that military expenditures and anti-nuclear campaigns are the most prominent examples where local social action and international/global issues have been joined. The military expenditures issue raises local concern because of the perception that these expenditures take away resources that could be devoted to local programs. The same could be true of the anti-nuclear issue, although this may be partly out of fear of a nuclear holocaust. Whatever the reasons, this does suggest that local activists are beginning to have some success in linking local issues to efforts to control direct violence in international relations. But there seem to be no similar successes with respect to social justice on a worldwide basis.

On the other hand, in most local communities there are people actively involved in efforts to help victims of injustice in Third World countries through organizations such as CARE, UNICEF, Project HOPE and other organizations offering relief and technical assistance. But these people tend

to be part of a separate culture of local people who are directly involved in international affairs. They differ from the local social activists that we have interviewed in that they tend not to work directly for social transformation but instead contribute voluntary time and money toward the end of helping victims of natural and human systems (often state and interstate systems) in distant places. But these people share with those working for local and global transformation an identity with suffering everywhere. And they have been able to transcend the national boundary limit placed on the direct involvement of local activists. It would seem that the differences between the local "internationals" and the local activists is yet another reflection of the impact of state ("nation") boundaries on social action. This produces a situation in which social action is only perceived to be possible within the state. Since social action appears to be unthinkable across state boundaries, response to social injustice across these boundaries is limited to relief and aid. Might there be possibilities for involving at least some of the local "internationals" in local-global transformation strategies?

The efforts of some local activists to combine action styles, ranging from confrontation to change in interpersonal relations and spiritual transformation may also contribute to the wide gap between localists and globalists. There seems to be a greater tendency on the part of most globalists to keep separate their personal lives and their prescriptions for global transformations, often resulting in personal behavior that even denies espousal of global social justice. Perhaps it is more difficult for local activists, under the scrutiny of local people, to be blatantly inconsistent in various dimensions of life. It might also be that action

in smaller space, where the impact of individual actions are more obvious, motivates people to fuller commitment of their lives to social goals.

Whatever the causes, what some might call the more "spiritual" aspect of some multi-action style local activists distinguishes them from many who advocate global transformation. This could have its origin in earlier experiences of global transformationalists with those people who exude goodwill for humanity, often based on some religious belief, but who tended not to be involved in action that put this goodwill into action. Indeed, the globalist often perceived, perhaps as a result of an understanding of global systems not shared by these people, that their actions contradicted their professed identity with the sufferings of humanity.

Lest we be misunderstood, we hasten to add that we are aware that there are those working for global transformation that do combine lifestyle change with other modes of action, we simply are trying to make the point that this seems to be more prevalent with local activists than with globalists. Also, we encountered in our interviews/dialogues cases in which religious belief was a fundamental factor in local social action, and sometimes seemed to be an important source for action that did combine local and global action. Nevertheless, we feel that the role of what is often called "spiritual transformation" is far more pronounced in local movements in the United States than in the movement for global transformation. It would seem that the development of common ground between globalists and localists might be facilitated by the injection in strategies for global transformation of something that satisfies those deep impulses in human beings that transcend striving for improved material conditions. We have difficulty in describing what this "something" might be, but it would be responsive to questions about the "meaning of life."

It might be said that there has to be a magnificence about global transformation beyond the meeting of bread and butter needs. Perhaps, overall, globalists tend to be too technocratic.

While there are great variations in visions of the future of globalists, there is a strong tradition for the invention of global futures. In contrast, we encountered a lack of visions on the part of local activists. Most respondents, when asked to talk about expected or preferred futures, were very hesitant and even unresponsive. Their visions rarely extend beyond their local place and their specific issue. Perhaps another way of stating it is to say that whatever their vision, it is decentralized, by implication rather than by articulation.

No doubt the differences between localists and globalists are again affected by differences in their arena of action. The globalists tend to see the need for new institutions and approaches in their arena of action and this usually implies centralized institutions, at least in some issue areas. The localists tend to see the need for new institutions and approaches in their arena of action and this usually implies new local institutions and approaches. Perhaps we globalists have become so accustomed to visions of the future involving centralization elements that we have difficulty accepting decentralized visions as viable alternatives. Perhaps the localists have become so frustrated by state centralization that they reject, without probing thought, all global visions that would include elements of centralization. It would seem that both localists and globalists could benefit from dialog about these kinds of differences in perspective. It might be helpful if globalists were to develop the capacity to accept a decentralized world as a possible approach to fulfillment of their values. There is no doubt a thoughtless reflex against

decentralization that is a part of the future thinking of many globalists. While we are less sure that thoughtless resistance to even limited forms of centralization is a part of the future view of many local activists, we suspect this is true. Thus we conclude that dialog on images of world futures between localists and globalists could be very useful in facilitating collaboration.

Finally, we find it to be highly significant that there are some local activists (our fourth prototype) who are breaking new ground by trying to combine local/global action. While we only encountered a small number, we believe that they reflect important new potential for global transformation. It is important that these activists be further studied in order to learn more about the origins of their unusual simultaneous active commitment to local and global issues, their programs and strategies and their successes and failures. More information about these localists/globalists could illuminate new possibilities that would help to bridge the tremendous gap that we discern between those working for local transformation and those working for global transformation in the United States.

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